

**Sounding Identity:
extending the traditional visual portrait form with
sound and music as its initiating media**

Carla Thackrah

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Creative Arts at the University of Technology Sydney.

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

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Signed certificate of original authorship

I, Carla Thackrah, declare that this thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Creative Arts in the School of Communication, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise reference or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

This research is supported by the Australian Government Research Training Program.

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List of Author's Creative Works with Links

Links to the creative works are also provided throughout chapters four and six.

- Practice Led Research Case Study: [*Voyeur Series*](#) (Thackrah, 2017)
- Major Project One: [*Self-portrait #1: Fragments of Presence and Absence*](#) (Thackrah, 2018c)
- Major Project Two: [*Self-portrait #2: Multiple Heads*](#) (Thackrah, 2019e)

Abstract

This thesis examines the traditional portrait form, that is, a single moment captured visually via paint or photography, and the limitations of this form when it attempts to represent a contemporary post-structural identity. Missing in the form is an awareness of the potential contribution that could be made by the intertextual addition of music and sound. While video and documentary portraits combined with sound allow more intertextual information about an identity to be represented, this form too has its limitations, in particular, the sound, which is usually synchronous and treated as subservient to the image. Hence, this research investigates in what ways can music and sound be most effectively utilised to extend the traditional practice of portrait making? Chapter one introduces the problem of portraiture, and chapter two reviews key texts across the disciplines of portraiture, music, sound, and film to understand music/sound's intrinsic power and the contribution it could make to the representation of a human identity. A series of case studies on key artists' work is included to demonstrate the point of departure the author has chosen to pursue. Beginning with a discussion of two significant historical artists who mark the changing depiction of 'self' within visual portraiture, the contextual review moves on to cover contemporary artists working in fine art video portraiture and sound portraiture. A creative work by the author is detailed in chapter four where two findings emerge; the place for music and sound as an intertextual element in the traditional portrait and the implications for the subject of portraiture when portraits, particularly these image/sound portraits, are created by a single artist. From these earlier chapters, a rigorous methodological framework is developed that provides a systematic set of eleven creative principles, the use of which enables the author's creative work to reveal new insights into the image/sound relationship, thus extending the traditional portrait. These principles are demonstrated through a series of portraits examining the role of music/sound as an equal partner to moving image. The findings confirm that the use of the eleven image/sound creative principles enables a new approach to the making of portraits, for artists, filmmakers, and scholars. Given the interdisciplinary approach, this research could also present a contribution to the emerging discourse of transdisciplinarity, in which the boundaries that define the artistic and academic disciplines of sound and image are questioned.